

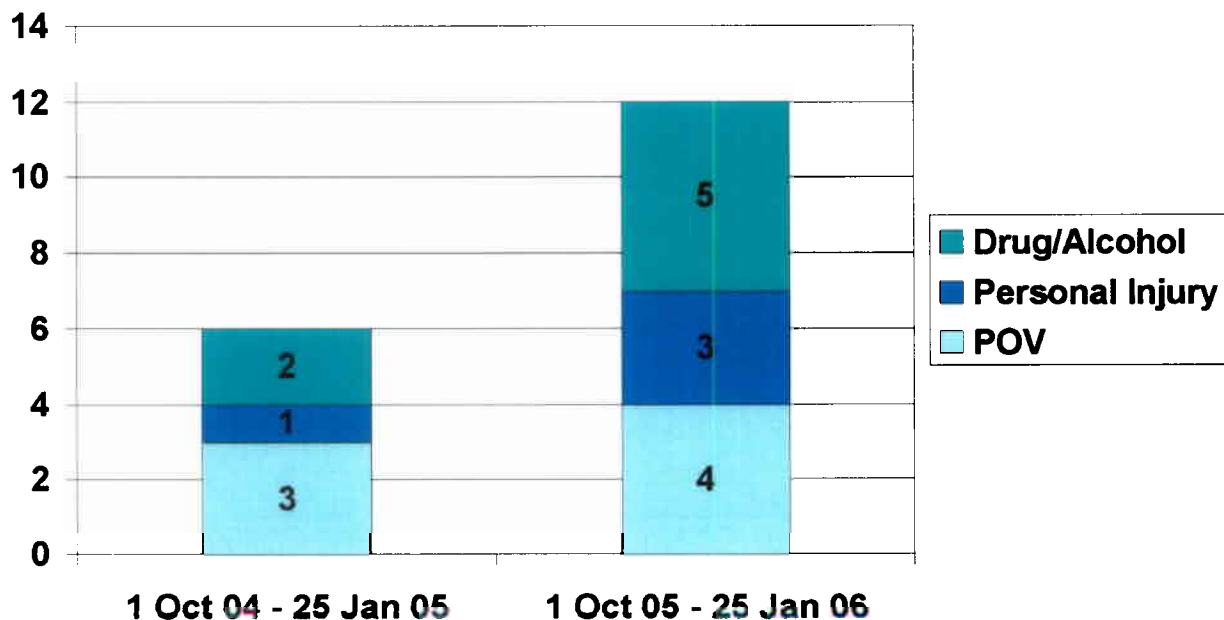


26 January 2006

### **Soldier and Family Readiness Alert: Soldier Losses Caused by High-Risk Behavior**

1. Several of our Soldiers recently died or were severely injured as a result of their high-risk behavior while off duty. Many of these Soldiers were suffering from stress or had a reputation for taking risks. In most of these cases, their leaders or battle buddies were aware that they needed help, but did not intervene effectively enough to prevent their loss.
2. The Army's Warrior Ethos states that we must *never leave a fallen comrade*. We must live by these words, both on and off the battlefield. This is especially important now while we are at war. Soldiers and their families are faced today with several stressors that can lead to negative attitudes and feelings, including alienation, bitterness, depression, grief, guilt, low self-esteem, rage, and self-pity. These feelings are fertile ground for the growth of problems such as alcohol abuse, drug use, spouse or child abuse, and acts of violence.
3. During the last 3 years, reported cases of drug use, family violence, financial problems, and incidents of anger and aggression have all increased in the Army in Europe. In addition, our fatality rate has risen very alarmingly over the past few months as shown in the chart below. We are leaving fallen comrades behind. We must take steps to reverse this trend.

### **Soldier Fatality Comparison FY 05 versus FY 06 (1st Quarter)**



**McKIERNAN SENDS #4-06**

● **Leaders:** Spend time with your Soldiers, on duty as well as off, so that you understand their personal challenges and sources of stress. Increase your awareness of your Soldiers' activities and intervene quickly to modify risky behavior. Make sure your Soldiers and other leaders in your unit are aware of all available counseling services. Refer Soldiers who exhibit suicidal behavior to a chaplain, those who show potential for child or spouse abuse to a local social worker or to a family advocacy counselor, and those exhibiting signs of alcohol abuse to the Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP) so that they can get help. These are just a few examples of the many services available to help Soldiers and their families. Your caring leadership will make a difference.

● **Soldiers:** Always use the buddy system. Make it your priority to check on your battle buddies in the barracks or at home. If they are in trouble, maintain contact with them. Many tragedies have been prevented simply because someone took time to listen. If a problem is too big for you to handle, seek the help of your leaders. The care we show our fellow Soldiers both on and off duty sets our profession apart from others. The Army is a family; take care of your Army family as you would your own.

4. As the Global War on Terrorism continues, we can expect more deployments, family separations, and other challenges. It is therefore essential that we all remain vigilant and sensitive to those around us and take action to prevent high-risk behavior from resulting in tragedy.



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